

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 608

**“An Act to Allow Junior, Senior and Veteran Hunters to Shoot Antlerless Deer on Opening
Day of Hunting Season”**

SPONSORED BY: Representative Hanington of Lincoln

CO-SPONSORED BY: Senator Willette of Aroostook and Representatives Farrin of Norridgewock, Hilliard of Belgrade, Kinney of Limington, Picchiotti of Fairfield, Pouliot of Augusta.

DATE OF HEARING: April 21, 2015

Good afternoon Senator Davis, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Nate Webb, the Special Projects Coordinator for Resource Management, representing the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 608**.

This bill would allow holders of a valid junior hunting license, a person who is 65 years of age or older who holds a valid hunting license or a veteran who possesses a valid hunting license to take an antlerless deer with a firearm on the first day of the regular deer hunting season established in section 11401. The registration fee for antlerless deer is \$10. A person who is 65 years of age or older and a veteran may not take more than one antlerless deer pursuant to this statute if enacted.

Maine's deer population is a fixed size; there are a definite number of deer living in Maine. The size of Maine's deer population is regulated, in part, by the number of doe deer killed by the various forms of hunting. The Department attempts to control the number of doe deer killed in each Wildlife Management District within a range that will allow the Department to meet its deer population management objectives throughout the state. This means that each year only a specific number of doe deer can be killed by all means of deer hunting. If this number is exceeded, the deer population will decline.

The bill does not limit the Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) where the antlerless deer may be taken so it is possible that in WMDs where antlerless permits have been limited or eliminated that harvest objectives will be exceeded. This would prevent the Department from achieving the publicly derived population goals within the deer management system. Beyond that the number of deer that can be killed by hunters is like a pie: if one desires to cut more slices from the pie [the various forms of deer hunting] then one or more of the slices must be cut smaller to accommodate each additional new slice. Allowing these three types of hunters to take an antlerless deer without an antlerless permit will increase the number of antlerless deer

taken. Should this occur, the Department would have to reduce the number of does killed by other hunters. This means that providing new opportunity for the groups listed above will result in less opportunity for others. There are a number of ways the Department could achieve a reduction in the doe kill, but the most likely to be considered, at least initially, would be a reduction in the number of antlerless permits issued to other firearm hunters, as this is the most accurate method to regulate the kill of doe deer.

Should the Committee decide to increase the number of antlerless deer available to different groups of hunters it is best done by applying those preferences in the allocation of permits within the permit drawing. This would allow the permits to be issued within the deer management system and support population objectives. This allows the Department to manage the harvest by directing hunting pressure to areas of the state that can sustain it and prevent over harvesting in areas where the deer population is below management objectives.

I would be happy to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.